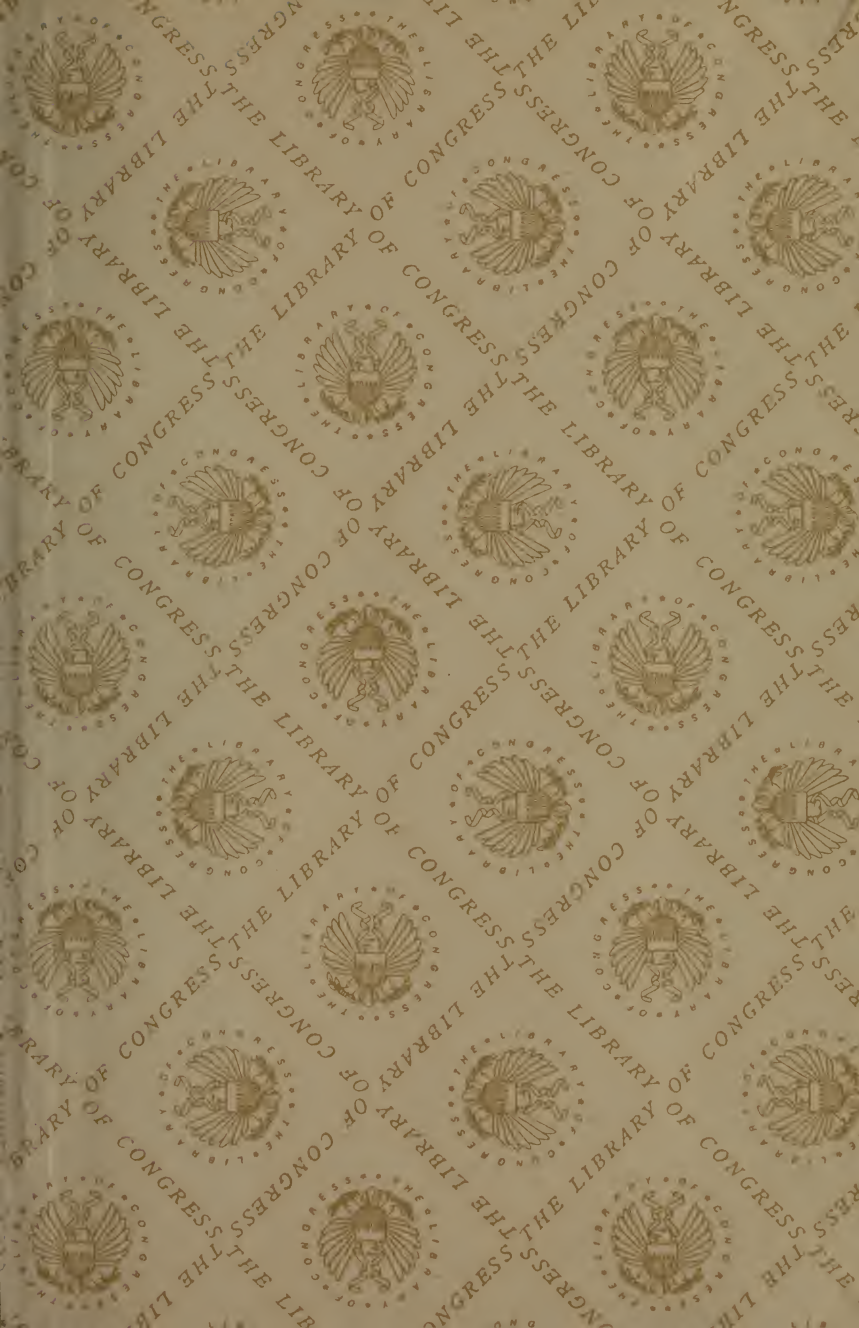


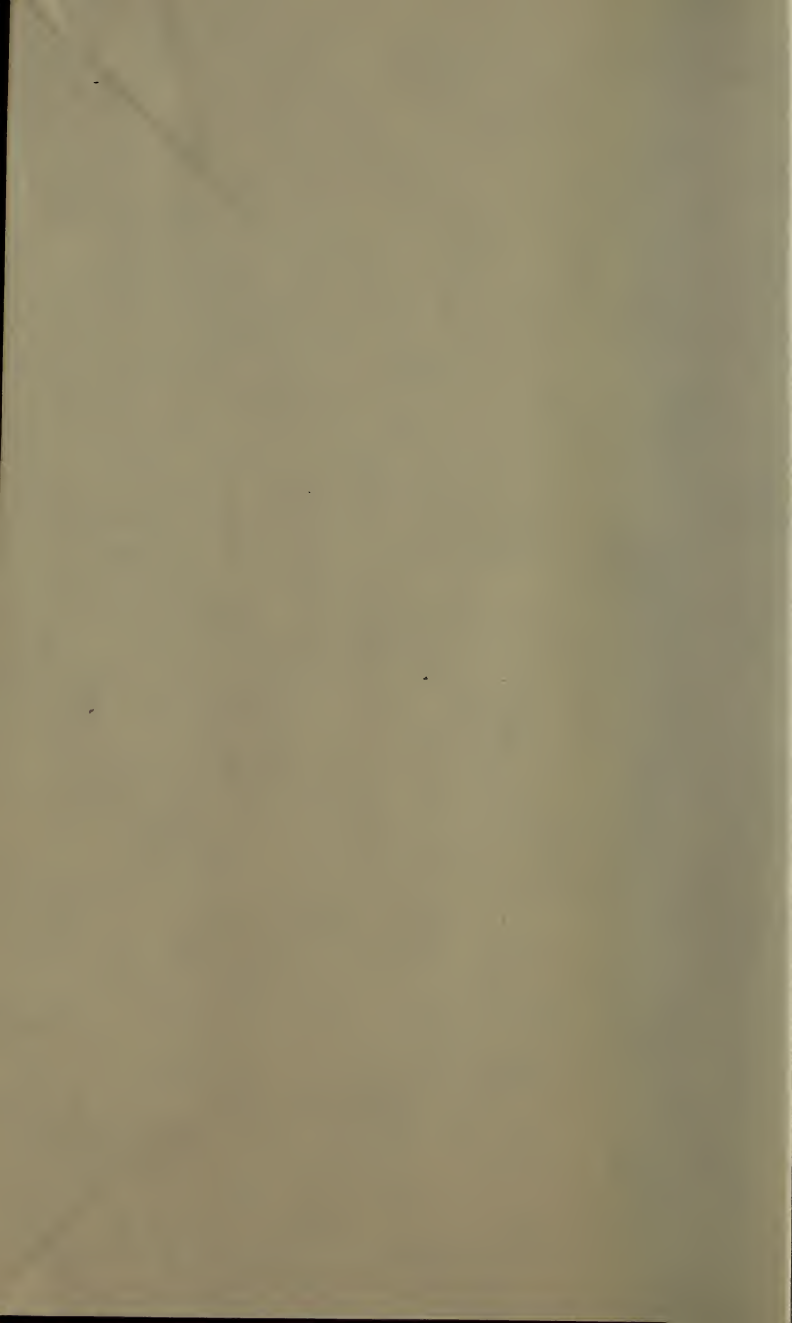
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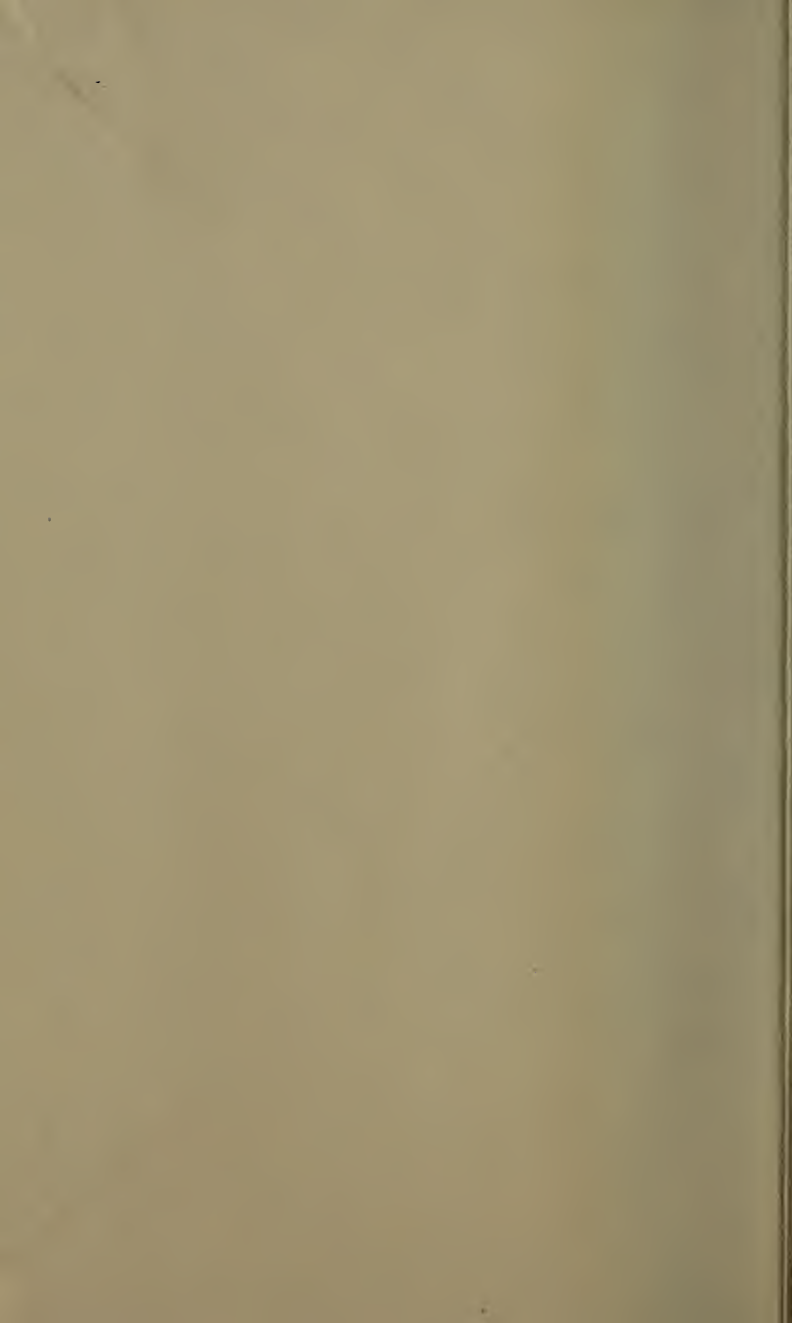
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WAR DEPARTMENT

SERVICE EDITION

NUMBER 1.

THE DRUMS OF OUDE

A Play in One Act

BY

AUSTIN STRONG

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WASHINGTON

**Commission on Training Camp Activities
Department of Dramatic Activities Among the
Soldiers.
1918.**

Monograph

As originally played on April 5th, 1905
at the Comedy Theatre, London.

CHARLES FROHMAN
Presents

"THE DRUMS OF OUDE"
A drama in one act
By AUSTIN STRONG.

CAPTAIN HECTOR MCGREGOR

Mr. Matheson Lang

LIEUTENANT ALAN HARTLEY

Mr. Kenneth Douglas

SERGEANT MacDOUGALL. Mr. Louis Goodrich

STEWART.....Mr. Hylton Allen

HINDUSTANI SERVANTS

Mr. Quentin MacPherson and Mr. A. Farrer

MRS. JACK CLAYTON....Miss Mabel Hackney

SCENE—*An interior of a palace in Northern India,
occupied by British troops in the Spring of
1857. (W. Hann).*

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PROPS.

Curved Indian knife.

Pistol

Cigar Box

Legal papers

Tray

Old-fashioned table

Horse hair chair

Odd chair

Drum

Piano and stool

Silver candelabra

Sherry bottle and glasses

Cake made of flannel and card-board

Standing lamp, red shade

Standing lamp, trick shade

In dark hall, red Indian lamp—hanging

Telegraph instrument

Muskets

Riding whip.

PLACE:—*An up-country town in Northern India.*

TIME:—*The Spring of 1857.*

SCENE:—*A store-room in an ancient Palace now occupied by the British.*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

CAPTAIN HECTOR MCGREGOR

LIEUTENANT ALAN HARTLEY

MRS. JACK CLAYTON (*Hartley's sister*)

SERGEANT MCDUGAL

STEWART (*the sentry*)

1ST HINDUSTANI SERVANT

2ND HINDUSTANI SERVANT

Music before curtain rises to be of that mysterious, nervous Indian quality, in a minor key, with the barbaric drum-beat measure throughout.

All lights out. Theatre in total darkness. Drumming is heard from beyond the stage, mingled with faint cries. This drumming must be great in volume, yet low in key. It stops short.

Repeats itself and again stops short. The CURTAIN has gone up in the darkness. The audience first become aware of the moonlit Indian City, in the distance, over the top of an intervening forest.

Then they see the outline of the archway and the stage itself, which is a store-room in an old Indian Palace, now occupied by the British. There is no furniture in the room except a Piano, R., and a business desk, R., rear. A large Indian carpet is upon the floor. The only decorations being two crossed swords on either side of the arch.

SENTRY STEWART, in Highland uniform, passes beyond the arch, in the moonlight, from R. to L. Pause. He returns. Pause. Then again from R. to L. The drumming swells in the distance and seems to come from the Indian City. As the SENTRY appears on his return beat,

the drumming ceases. He halts centre of archway and turns a puzzled face towards the audience and listens intently. Dead silence.

He is seen to breathe a sigh of relief, straighten himself and continue his stolid march. Silence.

Then with a crash door L. bursts open and MCGREGOR slides in. He shuts the door softly and swiftly and listens intently with his ear to the panels. He gives a glance at the open arch, then takes three steps centre, stoops, takes hold of the corner of carpet and flings it back. Rises, goes back to door L. and listens at panels again. Then returns centre and opens a trap-door which was beneath the carpet. The trap-door is three feet square and eight inches thick.

He looks carefully in and then closing it returns the carpet to its place, stands on it, and listens intently, his eyes to the audience. He then draws from his left-hand coat pocket a large leather cigar case. Chooses a cigar and returns case. He then slowly backs to wall R.—when he reaches it he strikes a match upon it with a downward sweep of his hand. He lights cigar and carefully putting out the match, he assumes a graceful, easy position, his back against the wall, his hands rammed deep in his coat pockets and his right foot crossed over his left. His eyes always on the corner of the carpet.

STEWART, the sentry, is seen to pass at rear. He halts again and listens as if he heard something. He turns his face towards the audience to listen better, and with a start becomes aware of MCGREG-

OR'S presence. He brings his musket sharply to the shoulder, comes down the stage and halts three paces from McGREGOR, his face towards the audience. He makes the stiff soldier's salute, right hand across the body.

McGREGOR continues smoking and regarding the carpet. Pause.

McGREGOR. (cigar between his teeth) Well, Stewart?

STEWART. Please, sir! Beg pardon, sir, but did you 'ear anything, sir?

McGREGOR. Eh?

STEWART. Listen, sir! (McGREGOR removes the cigar from his mouth and listens. Dead silence.)

McGREGOR. What do you mean?

STEWART. (Intensely) Listen, sir! (The drumming heard. It stops abruptly). There, sir!

McGREGOR. Well?

STEWART. Beg pardon, sir—but me and the men don't fancy it, sir.

McGREGOR. That will do, Stewart.

STEWART. Yes, sir! (salutes stiffly—faces about—marches out and resumes sentry duty, and is seen at stated intervals passing and re-passing beyond the arch).

(Door L. softly opens and TWO HINDUSTANI SERVANTS enter, one bearing a standard lamp with a red shade. The lamp is lighted. The OTHER bears a small table which he places at L. centre. The standard lamp is placed near the business desk. SERGEANT McDUGAL enters L. with private, both in Highland uniform and carrying telegraphic apparatus. They cross the stage and exeunt door R. After a moment ticking is heard from that room. The TWO SERVANTS have by this time returned with the two wicker chairs, which they place R. and L. and then exeunt. SERGEANT McDUGAL and PRIVATE return through door R.

The PRIVATE crosses stage and exits door L. SERGEANT McDUGAL comes down center.)

(Enter FIRST and SECOND HINDUSTANI SERVANTS through door L. They go over to MCGREGOR and salaam deeply before him.)

MCGREGOR. I want you to serve supper up here for two. *(They do not move. A pause)*. Did you hear what I said? I said—serve supper—supper—up here for two. *(They salaam and exeunt softly)*.

McDOUGAL. The telegraph is in working order, sir! *(He faces about and goes towards door L. Just as he is about to exit—)*

MCGREGOR. Sergeant!

McDOUGAL. *(stopping abruptly)* Y-y-yes, sir!

MCGREGOR. How many men on guard duty?

McDOUGAL. *(in a surprised tone)* Seven, sir! *(pause)*.

MCGREGOR. Wake the others up!

McDOUGAL. *(His tone more surprised)* B-b-beg p-pardon, sir!

MCGREGOR. Double the sentries—Put Neill and ten men on the ground floor with orders to let no one enter except women and civilians. Take the rest yourself and string them along the walls. North and West sides as much as possible, towards the dome.

McDOUGAL. Yes, sir! *(is about to exit)*. Pardon, sir—but—but do you know when the regiment will be back?

MCGREGOR. Can't say, McDougal.

McDOUGAL. Thank you, sir. *(is about to exit)*.

MCGREGOR. Sergeant!

McDOUGAL. Yes, sir!

MCGREGOR. Lieutenant Hartley will take command. Kindly wake him up with my compliments and ask him up here.

McDOUGAL. Yes, sir. *(Exits)*.

(Drumming is heard again. SENTRY is seen to

pass from R. to L., then L. to R. MCGREGOR still regards the corner of the carpet, the cigar between his teeth. Door L. opens and LIEUTENANT HARTLEY enters; a tall, fair-haired English lad, garrulous and pink-cheeked. He is buttoning his tunic and wears the expression of one who has been aroused from a deep sleep. He looks vaguely about for MCGREGOR, but does not see him).

MCGREGOR. Ah, Hartley.

HARTLEY. (*in a thick, sleepy voice*). Oh, there you are—didn't see where you were at first. Why in thunder—(*yawns*)—d-d-did y-y-you w-wake me u-up at this hour?—Must be near one or two or something—your man bounced me out of bed as if the house was afire. (*Goes over to table and mixes brandy and soda.*) And why have you moved up to this outlandish store-room? (*drinks glass, his voice becoming more awake.*) Shifted all your things, too! (*he pauses, and then becoming wide awake he suddenly asks*) I say, McGregor, what's up?

MCGREGOR. Listen! (*The drumming a shade louder*).

HARTLEY. Oh, that's the Mohurru business they're having. Guess the beggars will keep it up all night. They tell me it is a religious festival they hold here once a year. (*Hartley takes a few strides nearer MCGREGOR*) I say, you don't think there is anything nasty about it, do you?

MCGREGOR. India is a queer place, Hartley.

HARTLEY. By Jove—come to think of it—I—did you hear that queer rumor this morning?

MCGREGOR. Rumors—You're all alike, you youngsters. I was the same myself once—well, out with it!

HARTLEY. Something about a small cake——!

MCGREGOR. (*Sharply*) What?—Quick—where was it seen?

HARTLEY. (*Blithely*) The chaps I was talk-

ing to said that it was a sure sign that these devils meant mischief. They called it the fiery cross of India and they said that this little cake passes from hand to hand—from village to village—and the message which means mutiny and disaster flies faster than our telegraph!

McGREGOR. Oh, yes—I know all that——But where was it seen?

HARTLEY. This morning on the steps of the Mission! (*A pause while HARTLEY watches McGREGOR's face, who goes on smoking. HARTLEY, in an eager voice*) I say——by Jove——you don't think there's a chance for a row, do you?

McGREGOR. Hartley.

HARTLEY. Yes, old chap?

McGREGOR. You are standing over forty tons of gunpowder!

HARTLEY. (*standing back and looking down at the carpet*) What!

McGREGOR. Beneath you is the magazine!

HARTLEY. The magazine! (*stooping and lifting edge of carpet*) I didn't know it was here! Thought it was by the Colonel's quarters.

McGREGOR. Hartley, these sepoy's want that powder.

HARTLEY. Eh?

McGREGOR. I'm afraid they will be disappointed.

HARTLEY. I say, McGregor—do you really think——

McGREGOR. The regiment is away—we don't know when it will be back. The town is full of strangers (*Pause*) Hartley, there are women in this town—white women—English women.

HARTLEY. Rather—And, by Jove, there's my sister, Mrs. Clayton, the widow—I hadn't thought of her!

McGREGOR. Well, you see—I had, Hartley!

HARTLEY. (*surprised*) Why, what do you mean ?

McGREGOR. Only that I bribed her woman—her faithful ayah—to bring her here tonight under some pretext or other. I expect her any minute now.

HARTLEY. I say, that was clever of you! (*Pause. McGREGOR goes over Centre for the first time and looks through archway. HARTLEY, in a queer voice*) You have known my sister, Mrs. Clayton, a long time out here, haven't you?

McGREGOR. I remember her before she left England—when you were still at Sandhurst.

HARTLEY. She used often to write me of you.

McGREGOR. (*turning*) She did?

HARTLEY. You have been a better friend to her than ever Clayton, her husband, was.

McGREGOR. The man's dead, Hartley.

HARTLEY. Oh yes, I know—but it was all the mater's fault she ever married him. (*Pause. HARTLEY goes over to McGREGOR in a shy, boyish manner.*) I say, McGregor—give us a chance if there's a row?

McGREGOR. (*smiling*) I woke you up for that purpose. You'll take command of the walls in a few minutes. I don't trust anyone here except myself. That is why I had my things shifted. (*takes out watch*) The Colonel ought to be near Bandagaar by this time. You stay here a moment—I'll telegraph along the line. (*Goes toward the door at R.*)

HARTLEY. McGregor!

McGREGOR. Eh?

HARTLEY. You're a brick to give a fellow such a chance—thanks!

McGREGOR. (*laughing*) Don't be too sanguine, Hartley—it's a bad habit. Perhaps, after all, this is nothing. (*Exits into next room, at R. and after a moment is heard telegraphing.*)

(HARTLEY takes another look at the magazine, then goes to the center of the archway and listens a moment to the drumming, which, by fine degrees has grown louder. The SENTRY passes at rear, but doesn't see HARTLEY. HARTLEY goes over R. to business desk and idly looks over it. Picks up a newspaper, looks at it a moment, and then drops it. He sees writing materials upon the desk. He seats himself, spreads paper, leans forward and dips pen in ink).

HARTLEY. (as he writes) Dear Mater . . . This is the slowest station in Northern India . . . there is nothing to do . . . no society . . . nothing! Sis is practically the only English-woman of any account, except the Major's wife and Mrs. Indermaur. By the way, Captain McGregor, my senior, you remember him . . . the chap Sis used to write us about . . . Well, he's a thoroughbred and dead nuts on Sis . . . has been all his life, it seems. I think McGregor is the only man Sis ever cared a straw about, but she won't have a word said against Clayton's memory . . . (HARTLEY leans back in his chair, lifting his pen and searching the ceiling for ideas. Then leans forward and continues writing in silence.)

(Door L. softly opens and FIRST and SECOND SERVANTS glide noiselessly in, walking as Orientals do, straight from the hips. They move about quietly setting the table. The drumming ceases suddenly. The SERVANTS raise their heads slowly and look deep into each other's eyes, across the table. They both come forward centre without changing their relative positions or shifting their gaze from each other's eyes. They stand center a moment listening. Then a small, white cake, the size of a griddle cake, flies through the archway and falls between the SERVANTS. The FIRST SERVANT drops on one knee and covers the cake with

his right hand, and watches his companion. SECOND SERVANT takes four deliberate steps backwards, which brings him immediately behind HARTLEY, who is deep in his letter. SECOND SERVANT slowly draws from his bosom a pistol which he levels at HARTLEY'S neck, about two feet distant. HARTLEY blots letter with a satisfied air, throws down pen, leans far back in his chair, which brings the muzzle of the pistol within two inches of his neck. He passes his hand through his hair and reads) (*Reading in a satisfied air*)

. . . . and I always wear my flannels as you asked me to, and take my two grains of quinine regularly. I forgot to say in my last letter that Spiffy Watkins may have my cricket bat. I shan't need it again, but don't let anyone touch my fishing rod on any account! (*Leans forward to underline—"any"*) You needn't be anxious about me, mother dear—there is no danger in India. It's positively dull, it's so safe. Love to everybody—shall write the girls next mail. Your affectionate son, Alan Hartley. P. S.—I repeat—don't let anyone touch my fishing rod.

(*The ticking of the telegraph is heard to stop suddenly.* SECOND SERVANT hides pistol in his bosom. FIRST SERVANT rises and hides cake in his sash. Both assume position at door L., one immediately behind the other—watching HARTLEY intently. HARTLEY rises, folds letter, slips it into envelope, and is about to lick it when he becomes aware of the two Indians staring at him. He is taken aback. They drop their eyes—salaam, and exeunt together.) HARTLEY (taking five paces after them and stopping with a startled expression) By Gad, I didn't know those men were in the room. I wish these servant fellows would laugh or make a noise, or anything—instead of bowing and gliding about. (*with a slight shudder*) Makes a fellow feel deuced uncanny!

MCGREGOR. (*Entering with papers which he throws on business desk, then comes centre, sits*) Can't get the Colonel yet. They haven't reached the station—or they have passed it.

HARTLEY. (*still looking after the servants*) I say, McGregor, do you trust those two servants of yours?

MCGREGOR. (*laughing and coming forward*) Implicitly . . . Come, my dear boy, take a seat and have some supper. (*motions HARTLEY to a seat opposite to him at the table*) I would trust those two men with my life.

HARTLEY. Well, I suppose you know. For myself, I don't like them. Fact is, I never liked the looks of any of these vermin—they're so damned slippery.

MCGREGOR. Hartley, may I give you a piece of advice?

HARTLEY. (*Taking a large piece of toast. His mouth full*) Go ahead.

MCGREGOR. You are new to India—you have only joined the regiment three weeks, and you have an imagination . . . My boy, quell it—stifle it—for if you let it grow in this hotbed of rumors and strange noises, it will devour you! I have seen brave men made cowards by it . . . Sherry?

HARTLEY. Thanks. (*MCGREGOR pours it out*) Perhaps you're right, but talking of rumors—do tell me more about this chuppattie cake!

MCGREGOR. Fact is, no one knows much about them. A chuppattie cake is the commonest thing in India. Why, it's the food of the people—it's their bread.

HARTLEY. These chaps told me it was a signal of mutiny—they told me of a sentence that went with it—do you know it?

MCGREGOR. "Sub lal hogga hi." (*pronounced "Sub lal hoyarggi"*).

HARTLEY. And what does that mean, pray?

McGREGOR. (*slowly*) Everything is to become red!

HARTLEY. (*watching McGREGOR, who goes on calmly eating*). Do——do you believe in it?

McGREGOR. Depends, Hartley, where I saw one.

HARTLEY. What do you mean?

McGREGOR. If I saw a chuppattie in an out-of-the-way place——

HARTLEY. (*eagerly*) Yes?

McGREGOR. (*smiling*) India's a queer place, Hartley. (*pause*) I remember when I was with a sepoy regiment once, the Colonel had us out on a surprise inspection one night, and we found that a corporal had two chuppatties under his pillow (*pause*) We had a narrow escape that night. (*They both rise suddenly to their feet*).

HARTLEY. Did you hear that?

McGREGOR. (*Listening*) Yes.

HARTLEY. Sounded like . . . sounded like a whistle!

McGREGOR. Sit down! (*They both sit down*) (*Enter the TWO HINDUSTANI SERVANTS with more dishes for dinner*).

McGREGOR. (*to 1ST SERVANT*) Abdul, that lamp is smoking—turn it down. (*1ST SERVANT crosses the stage to R. to standing lamp, which he lowers. He listens all the while intently with his eyes fixed upon his companion, who is immediately behind HARTLEY. As he reaches centre of stage on his return, unnoticed by himself or any of the others the CHUPPATTIE falls from his sash to the floor near McGREGOR. Exeunt SERVANTS softly*).

HARTLEY. (*Using a siphon*) I don't like those two men!

McGREGOR. Oh, you will get over that, Hartley.

(*Door L. bursts open and SERGEANT McDUGAL enters, breathless—he salutes and stands*) (McGREGOR, *going on eating*) Well, McDougal?

MCDUGAL. (*Breathlessly*) Please, sir—Mrs. Cameron, Miss Williams and five other ladies, Mr. Palmer and Judge Lawson with some civilian gentlemen, have come into the walls, sir! They seek protection, sir! They're afraid of a rising, sir!

MCGREGOR. Ah! Is—is Mrs. Clayton with them?

MCDUGAL. N-n-no, Sir! P-p-please, s-sir—what'll I do with them, sir?

MCGREGOR. (*thoughtfully*) Well, I can't very well leave this room . . .

HARTLEY. (*rising abruptly*) I'll go!

MCGREGOR. Sit down—I want you here, Hartley! McDougal, put the ladies in the Mess Room and see that they are properly cared for. Give the gentlemen muskets and put them on the North side as much as possible. Lieut. Hartley will take command in a few minutes. McDougal!

MCDUGAL. Yes, Sir! (*about to exit*)

MCGREGOR. And McDougal——

MCDUGAL. Yes, sir!

MCGREGOR. If Mrs. Clayton comes, show her up here.

MCDUGAL. Yes, sir. (*salutes and exits*).

(*They go on eating in silence. HARTLEY tries to hide his excitement and watches MCGREGOR excitedly. At last, with a great show of unconcern he drains his cup of coffee, uses a napkin, throws it down, and speaks in an obviously careless manner*).

HARTLEY. My sister . . . You think she will get here safely?

MCGREGOR. I have known this servant of hers for years . . . Your sister will be here—don't you worry. (*Rises—another pause. HARTLEY tries again to hide his excitement*).

HARTLEY. (*Obviously making conversation*) I say, McGregor—I am interested about these chup-

pattie cakes—tell me what does one look like?

McGREGOR. (*Going over to business desk. He gets cigar box from a drawer and returns across stage. He pauses in the centre and looks out into the moonlight.*) Hartley, I don't see that sentry!

(*He remains silent a moment, looking out, then comes over to the table and throws the cigar box among the dishes*) Have a cheroot?

(*Business of HARTLEY choosing one. McGREGOR puts a match into the candle and facing audience holds it in the air, his eyes to the ceiling*) What's a chuppattie look like? Why, let me see if I can describe it to you.

(*Lights cigar thoughtfully—then looks upon the floor, match still burning in his right hand. Sees cake at his feet. Shakes out the lighted match slowly. Puts it carefully in the saucer. Takes a draw at his cigar, all the while examining the cake intently*) Well, it looks like a griddle cake . . . it's thick—and—er—white. (*Leans down and picks up with his right hand and weighs it*) Weighs about an ounce—looks deuced indigestible!

(*HARTLEY at this word is in the act of lighting his cigar under the candle shade. McGREGOR carelessly throws cake on table and it falls with a clatter among the dishes.*) Something like that, Hartley.

HARTLEY. (*sternly back*) My God—how did that get here?

McGREGOR. (*Looking over the heads of the audience*) I told you India was a queer place, Hartley. (*HARTLEY puts his cigar on his plate and watches McGREGOR's face excitedly.*)

McGREGOR. (*slowly*) The first thing to be done, Hartley, is to see if that sentry is there.

HARTLEY. (*Quickly*) I'll go and see! (*Turns and runs towards arch*).

McGREGOR. Stop! (*HARTLEY stops abruptly*)

Are you armed?

HARTLEY. (*With a rising inflection*) No!
(*Looks about*)

McGREGOR. You will find one in the left hand drawer of my desk. (HARTLEY goes to desk, opens drawer, takes out pistol, comes back center holding the pistol in front of him. Is seen to collect himself, square his shoulders and march out into the moonlight with military step. Halts without, his back to the audience.) What do you see?

HARTLEY. All the men seem to be at their posts. I see Mr. Palmer and Judge Lawson—they have given them muskets.

McGREGOR. And Stewart—the sentry? (HARTLEY disappears R. of archway, then returns at a run. He arrives breathless at McGREGOR's side).

HARTLEY. (*in a whisper*) They've cut his throat!

McGREGOR. Hartley! Hartley! (*Draws his cigar sharply from his mouth. Pause.*) Hartley, would you mind going into that room and telegraphing?

HARTLEY. (*Flying to the door R., breathless with excitement.*) What will I say?

McGREGOR. Get Bandaggaar If they don't answer get Sir John at Hadraa . . . then the Bulbud Residency . . . Repeat the one word "massacre" 'till someone answers you!

(Exit HARTLEY, banging the door. Then the sound of the machine repeating the same message over and over again. Drumming begins again. McGREGOR stands a moment longer looking over the heads of the audience, then goes quickly to the business desk and begins pulling out with feverish hurry papers and documents which he tears to pieces. His cigar between his teeth. Door L. opens with a bang and the TWO HINDUSTANI SERVANTS burst into the room, wildly searching for the lost chuppattie cake. FIRST SERVANT is seen

feeling in his sash. MCGREGOR turns sharply around.) What the devil——

(SERVANTS immediately salaam and make a pretense of going towards the table.) Oh yes, we have finished—you may clear away the things.

(He turns his back to them and goes on tearing up the papers. As soon as his back is turned, FIRST SERVANT signals through door at L. and out troop all the other SERVANTS. They tiptoe down stage, all with their eyes on MCGREGOR'S back. They pass through arch and one by one leap lightly over the parapet and out of sight. When all have gone—MCGREGOR speaking through his teeth, still tearing up his papers, his back to the empty stage) Look here, you men—I didn't like the way you burst into the room just now! (Pause, he goes on tearing up papers) What did you mean by it? (pause) I said, what did you mean by it? (He turns sharply) Look here, when I ask a question I expect an answer . . . (The words die on his lips as he sees the empty stage).

(Stands silent a moment, looking at the untouched supper table. Then takes three deliberate steps backwards, which brings him to R. of arch. He raises his hand and unhooks one of the Indian swords that decorated the wall, and throws it lightly on the desk within easy reach. He then leans comfortably on the side of the archway, looking out into the moonlight, smoking his cigar. A sound of running feet approaching. MCGREGOR'S hand is seen to move towards the sword on the desk. He continues smoking and looking out).

A WOMAN'S VOICE. Captain McGregor! Captain McGregor!

(MCGREGOR removes the cigar from his mouth and gives a quick look at the magazine door. Then, breathless and half crying with excitement, MRS. CLAYTON enters wildly and leans fainting against wall L. of archway. She covers her eyes

with her arm).

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Wildly*) Captain McGregor . . . your men . . . your men showed me up here . . . the town is rising! Save me! Save me!

MCGREGOR. (*In a polite voice, carefully putting cigar out in a small ash-tray beside him on the desk*) Why, how do you do, Mrs. Clayton?

MRS. CLAYTON. No—no—no—the sepoys—they're rising—where is my brother?—I escaped just in time! . . .

MCGREGOR. (*Wheeling on an easy chair towards her*) I know, but won't you sit down? . . . Your brother is here . . . in the next room.

MRS. CLAYTON. Can't you hear them? . . . they're coming . . . we'll all be massacred!

MCGREGOR. Come, Mrs. Clayton . . . (*Forces her gently into a chair*) Sit down. Your nerves are all awry. Calm yourself!

MRS. CLAYTON. Calm myself! . . . Listen! (*They listen a moment to the drumming*).

MCGREGOR. (*Going over to the table, taking a decanter with which he fills a small glass.*) Why, you know what that is, Mrs. Clayton; it's the Mohurrun business—religious affair—pious riot—quite harmless. Won't you try some of my sherry? (*Offers glass*).

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Waving glass aside*) Captain McGregor, the natives are pouring into the town by thousands! They are collecting at the bazaar! There is danger! I feel it here! (*Puts hand on heart*).

MCGREGOR. Do you think, Mrs. Clayton, that if there was much danger I would be here enjoying a cigar alone?

MRS. CLAYTON. I—I—I—suppose—after all—I—I—I—I have let my nerves get the better of me . . . but, oh, Captain McGregor—just as I was going to bed I began to hear that horrid,

queer noise they are making! (*Listens a moment*) I called Rebottie—you know her—my faithful ayah. Well, she told me that all the servants had fled!

MCGREGOR. (*Laughing*) You can no more keep a native from a Mohurrun than a small boy from a circus. My servants have left me, too!

MRS. CLAYTON. But this kind of thing never happened to me before! We flew to the stables to saddle our own horses, but they were all gone—they had taken them too . . . So we ran here on foot—choosing the back street. I could see the town was full of strangers—they are pouring from all quarters! When we came to your gates they sent me up here!

MCGREGOR. They did right—but after all this, you must calm yourself. (*Gives her the glass again which she reluctantly drinks. While she is in the act, he turns his head slowly and looks through the archway*).

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Weakly*) I'm afraid I've made an awful fool of myself. You'll have to forgive me, Captain McGregor. You know, really, I am not often frightened, but India has always been a land of horror to me. Full of sounds and strange noises—terrible—terrible silences . . . and always those eyes looking at you! One can't help thinking of what these sepoy will do when they at once let loose! Remember that Oude massacre . . . Massacre! Massacre! . . . I can't get that word out of my brain.

MCGREGOR. (*Still listening and not looking up*) Come—rest a bit. You're worn out!

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Suddenly, after a pause*) But I can't stay here—it's late! If you really think, Captain McGregor, that there is no cause for alarm, will you forgive a silly woman and let her return home?

MCGREGOR. (*slowly*) Won't you stay a bit?

. . . Your brother is here.

MRS. CLAYTON. I'd like to . . . (*Laughing*)—but it's growing very late!

MCGREGOR. Then I'll call Stewart and have him take you home. (*Goes toward arch, thinking deeply. Then stopping.*) By the way, won't you in the meantime play me something on my new piano? I had it shifted up here with my other things—I want you to try it for me.

(*Reluctant, yet to humor him, she pulls off her gloves and goes towards the piano. She pauses to put her gloves upon the table, and sees the chuppattie cake lying among the dishes. She turns quickly with a face full of horror to MCGREGOR, who is leaning against the archway and looking out*).

MRS. CLAYTON. (*In an awed and intense voice*) How did this get here?

MCGREGOR. Eh? . . . Oh . . . the chuppattie . . . Why, you know, I rather like them. Always have them for supper . . . I'm quite an Indian in my tastes.

MRS. CLAYTON. (*With a short laugh of relief*) You must think I'm an awful coward—but you know the rumor of these cakes, and that awful sentence, "All is to become red!" (*Stands still looking down at it with a frightened face*).

MCGREGOR. Come—you have been badly frightened, and I don't blame you. Do try my piano and forget for a moment this country which you detest so heartily!

(*MRS. CLAYTON goes over to the piano, seats herself and commences playing "THE WATER LILY" softly and with deep feeling. The drumming goes on. HARTLEY is heard repeating the one word incessantly on the telegraph. MCGREGOR keeps his position at the side of the archway, looking out. MRS. CLAYTON plays for some time in silence*).

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Stopping abruptly, and in a*

queer voice) Did you call that man to take me home, Captain McGregor?

McGREGOR. Yes.

MRS. CLAYTON. I didn't hear you.

McGREGOR. (*Coming down stage and leaning over the edge of the piano*) He will be here in a moment. (*She goes on playing again, looking up at him. His voice changes to one of emotion*) That was the melody you played at the Maharaja's ball.

MRS. CLAYTON. You remember that?

McGREGOR. Remember! . . . My life is made up of memories. (*Pause*) I remember the day when a fresh, young, English girl arrived on the decks of a great East Indianman—and how we cheered her pretty face! I remember a military wedding at Calcutta and Mrs. Jack Clayton the toast of the regiment. And then I remember when I first saw you in mourning . . . I remember many things! (*sighs*) (*Here a long pause. McGREGOR turns his face slowly and looks through archway*).

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Her voice low and full*) You have been a loyal friend! (*She plays*).

McGREGOR. (*Turning to her with a smile*) How wonderfully you play! (*A Pause*) What a strange and beautiful thing awakened memory is! One can live again those hours one has thought forever lost. Do you—can you—remember and live over those wonderful days—in the old bungalow by the river—the queer lights and tall shadows—when in the gaiety of your heart you called me Major Dobbin?

MRS. CLAYTON. Because you were so awkward and were always upsetting my tea cups and things—oh, yes—I remember.

McGREGOR. I thought you called me Major Dobbin because I was so faithful.

MRS. CLAYTON. Perhaps I did. (*She plays on a*

moment, and then stops and sits looking out into the moonlight in silence, McGREGOR watching her intently the while). What a dear fellow you were, Major Dobbin! Ah, a woman never forgets a man's friendship in a time like that—and it seems I can never get the chance—(*Turning to him*) to thank you enough!

McGREGOR. Thank me! . . . Why, I stood by you, as you call it, because I couldn't help myself—because you're the only woman worthy of the name . . . because you took your trouble like a thoroughbred . . . because . . . because you are beautiful . . . because you're straight and tall and your hair is brown . . . because you're true, and clean-hearted . . . because, old friend, I have loved you all my life!

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Her voice broken*) Major Dobbin!

McGREGOR. (*Coming to her side and kneeling on one knee*) Aye—Major Dobbin—as ever was!

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Putting her hand on his shoulder and looking down into his eyes.*) You know 'way down deep in your heart that you were the first and only one—and now, old friend, tried and trusted—after all these years of silence and pain—here is your reward. (*With a low laugh*) A poor thing, Major, but myself—my honor—my life—my—my—(*Tenderly drawing his head with both hands to her bosom and putting her lips to his hair*) . . . my Major Dobbin! (*McGREGOR raises his head and their lips meet. McGREGOR then stands straight and breathes deep*).

McGREGOR. It was worth it—it was worth the waiting for! (*The sound of a chair being violently overturned in room at R.*)

MRS. CLAYTON. What is that? (*Door bursts open and HARTLEY bursts in*).

HARTLEY. (*Shouting*) McGregor! McGregor!

McGREGOR. (*Going quickly up to him and*

speaking in a calm, rapid voice) Ah, Hartley . . . (*Turning*) Here is Mrs. Clayton, your sister . . . she sought our protection, thinking that perhaps this Mohurum was a sepoy rising, but I have assured her that there is no cause for alarm.

HARTLEY. (*Breathlessly*) It's all right, Sis . . . you needn't be alarmed . . . I—I—I—if there had been any danger we would have heard of it.

MRS. CLAYTON. You must forgive us, poor women, our cowardice, Alan—it is only when we realize our helplessness that we are frightened. Sometimes I wish that I were a man—a soldier—a Highlander like yourselves—instead of a woman who has to wait and listen . . . and listen . . . and listen!

HARTLEY. (*Blatantly*) It is not all beer and skittles being a man, I can assure you, Sis . . . Why, do you know—just now . . . !

McGREGOR. (*Sharply*) Hartley!

HARTLEY. Eh?

McGREGOR. Would you kindly take a message for me?

HARTLEY. Pardon me, Sis. (*She inclines her head and goes on playing, her eyes to the keys. HARTLEY goes over to McGREGOR and both watch her as they speak*).

McGREGOR. (*In an undertone*) Well, what is it?

HARTLEY. (*In an excited whisper*) They have cut the wires!

McGREGOR. Ah—I thought as much!

HARTLEY. Sir John says, don't let them get the powder!

McGREGOR. He needn't worry.

MRS. CLAYTON. (*Stopping her playing and looking up*) Is your man ready, Captain McGregor? (*politely*.) It is growing very late!

MCGREGOR. I am sending your brother to hurry him up. (MRS. CLAYTON *goes on playing*).

HARTLEY. (To MCGREGOR) Well?

MCGREGOR. You'll take command now at once, as they shall be on us in a moment. Hold them off as long as possible. I'll stay here and watch that powder. (*Points to the corner of the carpet.*) I daren't trust anyone in this room except myself. If they once get over the walls . . .

HARTLEY. We're lost!

MCGREGOR. If they once do, Hartley . . .

HARTLEY. Yes . . . ?

MCGREGOR. Have the bugler sound the charge so that I can hear it. Make him play it loudly, mind you!

HARTLEY. And then——?

MCGREGOR. I shall blow up the magazine!

HARTLEY. By Jove——

MCGREGOR. Quick—say a word to your sister, and go! (HARTLEY *backs down stage, watching MCGREGOR, who is looking out into the moonlight—he feels the air behind him for his sister*).

HARTLEY. (As he reaches her) (She *continues to play*) I say, Sis, I'm going for the man. I won't be back myself—he'll see you safe home. I want to say good—good-night!

MRS. CLAYTON. (Continuing her music) Good-night, old fellow!

HARTLEY. Sis?

MRS. CLAYTON. (Stopping and looking around) Yes, Alan?

HARTLEY. Pardon my asking, but—has McGregor said anything to you?

MRS. CLAYTON. (Looking up and smiling) Yes.

HARTLEY. (With enthusiasm) I'm glad! (Bending and kissing her tenderly) Good-night, old girl!

MRS. CLAYTON. Good-night, my brother!

HARTLEY. (Goes up to MCGREGOR and gives

him his hand in silence) I congratulate you . . . By Jove, you are a brick . . . (lower) Good-bye! (MCGREGOR gives him his hand in silence and HARTLEY exits, drawing his pistol).

(MCGREGOR remains a moment looking after him, and then comes down stage and leans on the piano and watches MRS. CLAYTON as she continues to play softly. A Sepoy's head and shoulders rise up stealthily from behind the balustrade—beyond the arch. First an arm appearing, then a turban, and then a white trousered leg is thrown over the balustrade. MCGREGOR turns quickly and sees the SEPOY who instantly drops out of sight. MRS. CLAYTON has seen nothing and continues playing dreamily. MCGREGOR goes at once to the desk and quickly opens a drawer and takes out a black coil of fuse. He comes down centre. He throws back the corner of the carpet, opens the magazine door, gives a quick look through the archway, and lowers one end of the fuse deep into the magazine).

MRS. CLAYTON. (Not looking up) Ah! I'm so happy . . . Tell me, dear, you like my brother?

MCGREGOR. (Backing and uncoiling fuse) Rather! (MCGREGOR leaves end of fuse near center).

MRS. CLAYTON. I suppose India will spoil him like all the rest—but it's like a breath of old England to see his boyish honest face!

MCGREGOR. Rather . . . (He says this as he is in the act of taking one of the silver candlesticks, removes the shade, and places it with the lighted candle near the end of the fuse).

MRS. CLAYTON. I remember when I first saw India—how terrified I was—the bronze and blackened faces . . .

(She happens to look around. She stops playing and rises slowly. MCGREGOR is standing over the lighted candle with his hands rammed in his

coat pockets. *He is looking out into the moonlight. She looks from him to the open magazine, and back to him again).*

MRS. CLAYTON. What are you doing?

McGREGOR. (*Turning his face towards the audience*) You will pardon me—I have lied to you. I am afraid after all, there is danger. (*A pause—Mrs. CLAYTON remains perfectly still*) I thought perhaps I'd spare you unnecessary alarm, but I'm afraid I can't—you see, the regiment is not on time. I know you for a thoroughbred—you've the blood of soldiers in your veins. So I can tell you plainly how we stand?

MRS. CLAYTON. (*After drawing a quick breath*) Tell me!

McGREGOR. That door you see open is the powder magazine . . . You know what it means if these Sepoys capture it—You know what it means if I let them capture you. You know what it means when they get an Englishwoman in their power! My Highlanders will hold them off as long as possible, and if they fail . . . you see my duty?

MRS. CLAYTON. (*after a pause, while she struggles with herself*) Yes!

McGREGOR. I thought it would seem a hard thing to do, but with you beside me—why, girl, I am going to blow up that magazine . . . Will you stand by me?

MRS. CLAYTON. With my last breath! (*The sound of musket shooting without, rapid and terrifying*).

McGREGOR. Ah, they've begun already! (*They stand listening*) Tell me if you hear the bugle call! (*The noise without becomes deafening. Savage yells, hoots and firing. The sky through the archway turns scarlet as if the city were afire. Suddenly the standing lamp at R. is shot to pieces by a stray bullet.* MRS. CLAYTON screams, but

still stands beside piano) What's that? (They listen. A sudden lull in the battle and a tiny call is heard gallantly playing in the distance. McGREGOR slowly leans down and takes the lighted candlestick in his hand and looks up at MRS. CLAYTON. She goes to him. He then slowly and carefully touches the fuse with the lighted candle. It burns with great display towards the magazine. Together they watch the fuse as it hisses and splutters towards the yawning pit. The noise without becomes deafening. The red light flares more brilliantly—when suddenly the noise stops—dead silence).

MRS. CLAYTON. (Dashes for McGREGOR's side) Stop it! Stop it! (She flies to the fuse and stamps it out) Can't you hear it? . . . Listen!

(Pause. They both listen. Then far away in the distance is heard fife, drum and bagpipes playing, "The Campbells Are Coming, Ye Ho, Ye Ho." It swells louder at each approaching step).

(HARTLEY enters wildly, his coat torn off his back; he carries his smoking revolver, which he waves madly).

HARTLEY. (Hoarsely, and with excitement) McGregor—McGregor—it's all right! The Highlanders are here! We're saved—saved!

(Exits reeling and shouting).

(McGREGOR puts the candle out by striking the flame with his open palm and catches MRS. CLAYTON just as she faints, falling backwards into his arms).

(CURTAIN falls on this tableau now lit with red fire smoke and resounding with rousing British cheers, drums and bagpipes.

—END—

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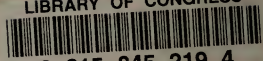
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